

Interviews in Depth

ZAPU ZIMBABABWE



GEORGE NYANDORO.

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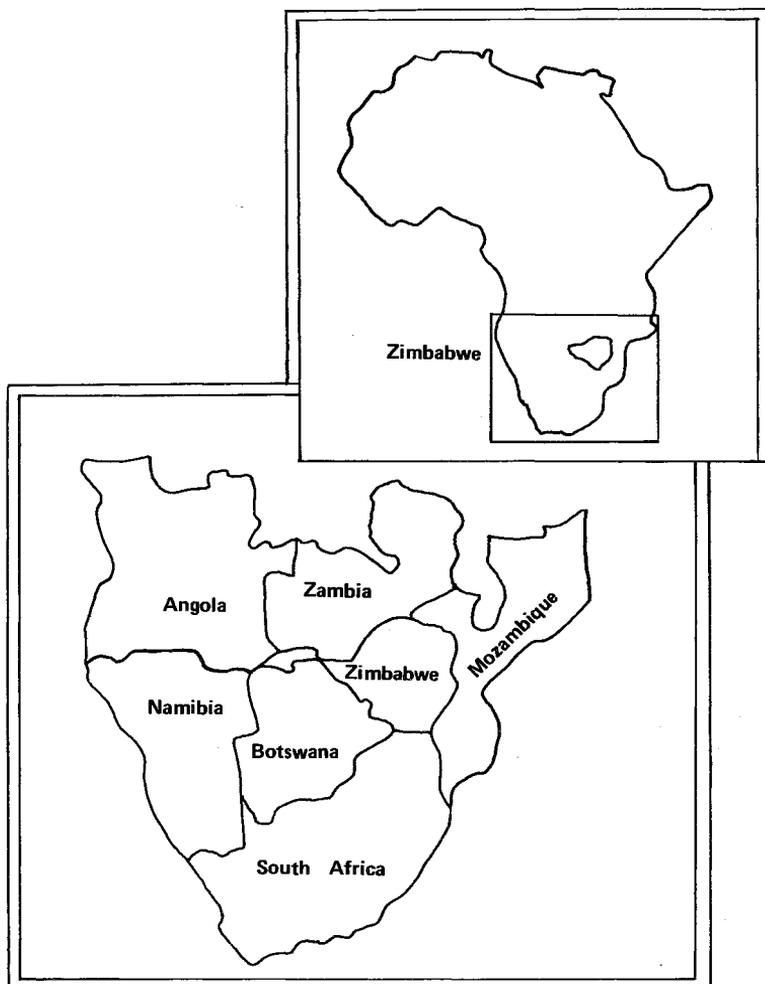
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INTERVIEWS IN DEPTH

ZAPU-ZIMBABWE #1

Zimbabwe African People's Union.



**Interview with George Nyandoro
General Secretary of ZAPU.**

INTERVIEWS IN DEPTH

ZIMBABWE/ZAPU

#1.

GEORGE NYANDORO

The following interview with George Nyandoro was taped by Don Barnett in Dar es Salaam on 16 May, 1968. Mr. Nyandoro was until recently the General Secretary of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU).

QUESTION: ZAPU was founded late in 1961 after the National Democratic Party (NDP) was banned. Perhaps you could comment on the social and historical background of this transition from NDP to ZAPU.

NYANDORO: It is difficult to begin by merely telling you about the transition from NDP to ZAPU. One must first give a brief resume of what happened prior to that time. The liberation movement, you know, has been going on in Zimbabwe for many years -- ever since the settlers came into Rhodesia. It has increased or decreased in intensity according to the circumstances of the time. In 1954-55, the Youth League (YL) was formed in Salisbury. The African National Congress (ANC) was active in Bulawayo but was no longer functioning in other areas. The youth of that time felt there was no need for the ANC in Bulawayo to disband and constitute themselves a branch of the YL. It was decided that the two bodies, whose objectives were identical, should continue, with the objective that they work toward the formation of a national movement which would cover the whole country. And this was the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress, which was formed in September, 1957. The leader of this movement was Joshua Nkomo. Ever since that time we have seen the movement spreading throughout the country, in both urban and rural areas. In the rural areas it was quite a task to remind the people of the way their forefathers -- some of whom were still alive -- had fought against the aggression of Rhodes and his gangsters when they came to Rhodesia. In the urban areas we dealt with problems of labor exploitation, the color bar, and so on. So the movement for liberation gathered momentum at that time,

1957-58, and by 1959 we had achieved our first well-organized national movement, with branches and officials spread throughout the country and a national executive. In February, 1959, we were all arrested -- over 500 of us in Zimbabwe alone. A State of Emergency was declared throughout the Central African Federation, which then included the Rhodesias and Nyasaland. After this, for the rest of 1959, there was no real political movement in Zimbabwe. But in January 1960 we formed the National Democratic Party. This was achieved both by those of us in prison and those who happened to be outside the country when the ANC was banned. We smuggled letters and notes out of the prison toward this end, and also advised that Joshua Nkomo remain outside Zimbabwe where he could continue to keep our struggle alive in the minds of our people and the outside world. So he remained outside until the end of 1960, when a conference of the NDP was held to choose its leadership. Nkomo was again elected president. As far as the people of Zimbabwe were concerned, the NDP was simply a continuation of the ANC under a different name. And they felt the same way when the NDP was banned in 1961 and ZAPU emerged later that year, under the same leadership, to carry on the struggle. So, despite changes in name and setbacks caused by Government repression, there has been a continuity in the national liberation struggle and its leadership since at least 1957.

QUESTION: Throughout this period you're talking about the successive nationalist parties were legal, is that correct?

NYANDORO: Yes, these organizations were allowed to operate -- but, like the ANC, they were all subsequently banned after mobilizing the masses throughout the country.

QUESTION: What were the programs of the various nationalist organizations during this period?

NYANDORO: The program has never changed -- not even up to this very day. It has always been to gain independence for the people of Zimbabwe. There have been many particular grievances -- including that against the Central African Federation, which stood in the way of independence, the alienation of African lands, restrictive legislation, oppression and repression carried out by the police, lack of freedom of movement, lack of adequate educational facilities, etc. -- but fundamentally all these organizations were committed to the liberation of the country from white settler rule. It was felt that we could not solve any of these other social problems unless we were governing ourselves. The masses of Zimbabwe, unlike those in some other African countries, were cognizant throughout of the fact that we could only gain our independence by fighting for it -- we never ruled out violence.

QUESTION: Have there been any significant changes within ZAPU over the past six years with respect, say, to ideology or methods of struggle?

NYANDORO: What we have had, I would say, is a significant escalation of the struggle. In 1958 it was difficult to get hold of a gun or a hand grenade due to the strength of the imperialists throughout Africa. The decolonization process had not reached a point where we could create bases outside to train our men and so forth. The escalation which has taken place was in large part due to the favorable conditions created by the emergence of independent African states. Our people were then able to move more freely and organize an effective armed struggle. Ideologically, as the struggle has progressed, the ideals of socialism have become a factor, a point of serious discussion

within the movement. Of course, no discussion could be carried out among the masses about Marxist-Leninist theory. But the broader aspects and principles of socialism are well-understood by the people. Traditionally we had no capitalism in Zimbabwe and the social fabric contained many collective aspects and principles of mutual responsibility and aid. I can't say there was no personal property by individuals. There were some people with more cattle than others, and so on. But normally, if a person had no cattle, someone would give him a cow and out of the progeny of that cow he could build up his own stock. If you were willing to work hard, society gave you the means of making a living. If you didn't work hard, or were lazy, you were the laughing stock of the community. So you were forced by society to work hard. Much of this remains even today, particularly in the countryside, where most of our people have not yet been drawn into capitalist relations of production. So in terms of socialist ideological training, what needs to be done is to sharpen our people's awareness of certain fundamental tenets of socialism which were practiced traditionally. Then it will not be very difficult to introduce and teach scientific socialism -- for it will not be an entirely new thing for the masses to comprehend. It must also be said that the only real exploiters known by the present generation of people in Zimbabwe have been foreigners -- white settlers from Britain and South Africa. These are the people who have established capitalist industry and farming in our country, who have sucked the wealth out of our land and labour, and who have been oppressing us. So the struggle is seen by the masses as being between the whites and the blacks. Very few Africans have acquired any real wealth in Zimbabwe and they are merely agents of the capitalists who may own a small shop, engage in petty trade, etc., and who get some of the crumbs which fall from the master's table. The

settlers think they are creating a middle class with these people. But such Africans are not really capitalists, not really rich -- though psychologically they are made to believe that they are capitalists. As for the broad masses of the people, they accept ZAPU's socialist policies without question. For them black is synonymous with the oppressed class and white with the rich capitalist class.

QUESTION: You seem to be in agreement then with two widely held tenets of "African socialist" thought. First, that within the peasantry there exists a spontaneous tendency toward socialism; and second, that class differences among Africans are so minimal as not to constitute a problem.

NYANDORO: In contemporary Africa there are many contradictions. Some countries merely profess to be socialist, others are genuinely struggling; a few are succeeding, the majority are failing. Some are building up a middle class very rapidly. As far as Zimbabwe is concerned, I do not pretend that we are not going to have a group of people who will want to form a privileged class, a group of people whose aim will be to penetrate the higher echelons of power, the civil service and other instruments of government. There will be such people. But they will only be enabled to flourish and entrench themselves, as in many other African states, if ZAPU is not well-organized. So far, during the liberation struggle, the decisions of the people have been paramount -- rather than the reactionary opinions of certain people, even in the leadership. Thus, when ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) was formed, certain people who broke with ZAPU imagined that they could get thousands and thousands of people to follow them, to applaud and respect them as when they spoke at ZAPU mass rallies. They thought they were in a commanding position. But

the moment they diverted from the policy of ZAPU they were regarded by the masses as renegades. And that is why today they have no base of support among the people. At present, of course, we are not able to organize ourselves, or to formulate and propagate our policies, as freely as in independent African states. But despite the very restrictive conditions which exist, there has been a consistent dictatorship of the masses in Zimbabwe -- a qualitative dictatorship which insists that it is our role to lead them to independence. During the liberation struggle our main objective is to seize power -- then we can begin the social revolution, begin to put our socialist principles into practice. When we liberate an area, then we will begin our social revolution from that base -- in practical terms. Until that time, until we have power in a liberated area, considerations of socialist program and policies are necessarily confined to the realm of pure theory.

QUESTION: I think you'd agree, however, that you have to cope with practical problems involving socialist principles even before you have achieved a liberated territory within Zimbabwe; questions, say, of establishing democratic organization within the liberation army, of avoiding the highly stratified Western-type military system, of criticism-self-criticism, of ranks and differential privileges, etc.

NYANDORO: In our camps, where we live together with our comrades, there are no privileges, no differences of this sort between commanders and regular guerrillas. Nobody receives any pay and we all eat the same food -- there is no difference between what the commander eats and what the other men eat, absolutely none. The only difference is in the work people do, in the responsibilities each person accepts, etc., but there are no other dif-

ferences or privileges among the people in our movement.

QUESTION: Perhaps you could discuss the essential causes underlying the ZAPU/ZANU split, and what you consider to be the major differences in the two lines.

NYANDORO: ZANU was formed by men who, in the early days of the national liberation movement, both rejected identification with the masses and were connected to settler political organizations -- such as Welinsky's United Federal Party, the Central African Party, and the Capricorn African Society. As decolonization was spreading rapidly throughout Africa, together with the general awareness of the need to gain independent African power, these men were forced to join the nationalist movement. Their motives, however, were not good; they didn't want to liberate the country for the sake of the masses, they simply felt it was time to climb on the nationalist bandwagon in order to gain personal positions of power. At that time, though the masses expressed grave doubts about these men, we wanted solidarity among Zimbabwe Africans and felt it was necessary to bring them, in good faith, into the nationalist movement. Still, the masses were not sure of them; but as they continued to work they endeared themselves as individuals within the machinery of the party.

Then when a State of Emergency was declared and ZAPU was banned in December, 1962, these men, headed by Rev. Sithole, set out to take over the leadership of the nationalist movement. Their objective at first was not to form their own party, but to gain control of ZAPU. They wanted to remove Nkomo and a number of other officials in the organization who didn't share their reactionary ideas. When this failed, they formed ZANU and attempted to

split the nationalist movement . . . with the help of their old settler friends and the British and American imperialists. There was a spontaneous reaction from the masses, from the ordinary people in ZAPU's rural and urban branches. They said: "See, we told you not to allow these men to come in; now look what they've done, they've divided the nation at the critical moment". ZANU was unable to gain any support at all from the masses.

Why is it, you might ask, that ZANU is still there, still exists? The answer is, first, because Oscar Kambona, then Tanzania's Foreign Minister and Chairman of the OAU Liberation Committee, and now in exile, gave his support to ZANU and pushed their acceptance throughout the world. And second, because the imperialists, particularly the United States, became deeply involved in the promotion of ZANU. This was evidenced by the ZANU leaders themselves, who were bragging that they had been promised large sums of money from the West if they were successful. And they had already begun to receive financial aid through the United States Consul General in Salisbury. The British industrialists were alarmed when, after the Duke of Devonshire commented that the Africans of Zimbabwe were unable to govern a country with such a complex economy, Joshua Nkomo replied that: "If it is industry which is stopping us from getting our independence, then we'll have to destroy industry". Thus, the objective of all these capitalist forces was to destroy Nkomo and the other uncooperative ZAPU leaders. They prompted their "boys", who were formerly in the European settler parties, to form a new organization -- ZANU.

QUESTION: There is considerable confusion on this point in the minds of progressive people outside Zimbabwe. Many believe that ZANU stands to the left of ZAPU -- and this was reinforced when Stokely

Carmichael seemingly threw his support behind ZANU during his stay in Tanzania.

NYANDORO: The capitalist powers have waged an intensive propaganda campaign, using all of their mass media, to discredit and destroy ZAPU. Because they know that if they can destroy ZAPU they will be able to achieve their objective of getting the right boys into power to pursue the right policies -- designed of course by the imperialists themselves. As for Stokely Carmichael, he knows virtually nothing about the liberation struggle going on inside Zimbabwe. He came to Tanzania during his world tour, talked to a few ZANU and pro-ZANU individuals, then publicly supports ZANU and attacks ZAPU leaders as cowards, etc. Where and how did he gather evidence on the ZAPU/ZANU question? Certainly not in Zimbabwe. And he never came to talk to any ZAPU leaders while he was in East Africa. Mr. Carmichael may be considered a revolutionary in the United States but, as far as ZAPU is concerned, he has no opinions which the people of Zimbabwe would respect in any way at all.

All we can say then regarding the confusion you mention is that it will probably continue as long as the imperialist powers are bent on perpetuating it. Their objective is to disorganize and weaken the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe and confusion is one of the instruments they use.

QUESTION: Perhaps you could discuss the present structure of ZAPU.

NYANDORO: At the lowest level of organization, according to the ZAPU constitution, we have branches, local branches to one of which every member of ZAPU belongs. Each branch must have at least 15 members. Then you have an executive council within every branch. A number of branches are joined in a

district, headed by a district executive council. The branches in each district select members from their own executives to serve on the district executive council. Then, above the district councils, we have a regional secretary whose function is to coordinate the district councils in his region. That is, his main function is to act as a contact for administrative purposes between the national executive of ZAPU and the various branches in his region. Then we have the national executive. The over-riding body is the People's Council, which is chosen by a national congress of delegates from all the districts. It is the People's Council which selects the national executive. As things stand now, most of the members of the national executive are in prison or detention within Zimbabwe; five are outside at our Lusaka headquarters.

QUESTION: When were you able to hold your last national congress?

NYANDORO: That was in 1963. But this is the structure of ZAPU up to this very day -- in the constitution and in reality. We can't hold a congress because of the difficult conditions in Zimbabwe. But the branches are still operating, the district executive councils are still operating, and so forth.

QUESTION: Since mid-1967 the armed struggle within Zimbabwe seems to have become considerably more intense. How would you assess the progress you have made over the past nine months?

NYANDORO: The armed struggle sharpened qualitatively late last year, when our guerrilla fighters attacked and killed many of the enemy troops. Prior to that time we were using petrol bombs, hand grenades, etc., and various forms of sabotage -- it was all part of the armed struggle, but since

August, 1967, the level of combat has certainly increased. Our guerrillas are active in many parts of the country, often as close as 20 miles from Salisbury, and they are winning increasing support among the masses, many of whom we are training in the arts of guerrilla warfare. The Smith regime is now very frightened; they have to increase their local forces and bring in South African reinforcements. For the first time in Zimbabwe they recently began to use South African jet bombers to attack our positions in several areas.

QUESTION: From the standpoint of ZAPU, what has been the major advantage derived from the recent merger of ANC and ZAPU forces within Zimbabwe?

NYANDORO: This alliance of our two organizations, through the pooling of resources, has had the obvious advantage of increasing the strength of our guerrilla forces and increasing the overall efficiency of the armed liberation struggle in Zimbabwe and the whole of southern Africa. The alliance, in fact, should have been born long ago. South African fascist troops have been in Rhodesia for many years now, assisting the Smith regime, and the ANC guerrillas trained outside can't enter South Africa except through Zimbabwe. As Smith, Vorster and Salazar join forces in their counter-revolutionary crusade, so must the liberation movements of southern Africa draw closer together in the efforts to crush the imperialist and white settler regimes and liberate their countries.

QUESTION: How do you view your struggle in Zimbabwe in relation to the Vietnamese struggle against U.S. imperialism?

NYANDORO: The Vietnamese are fighting against imperialism and so are we. In Vietnam they are struggling against a puppet regime supported by the

Americans, and in Zimbabwe we are fighting against a settler regime supported primarily by the British. But apart from specific historic differences, we are both fighting against imperialism and for independence and self-determination.



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